

Let us do what we encourage all of our children to do and save for the future. I encourage this Congress to take a strong look at the Blue Dogs' 12-point plan and establish a rainy-day fund.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURGESS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### A REMARKABLE DAY IN IRAQ

Mr. HAYES. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HAYES. Madam Speaker, this has been a remarkable day in Iraq, and I would like to redirect our attention for a moment to the things that Mr. OSBORNE outlined. Remarkable, the accomplishments of Iraqi people today. More than 70 percent of their population went to the polls and exercised the right that they have never had before, the right to vote for a democratic government. That vote was courageous. It showed commitment. It showed the resolve of the Iraqi people to take control of their destiny and their future. It was a tremendous step forward for peace, stability in the future of freedom in the Middle East. So I would like to take a part of my time to salute and to call attention to the incredible things that the Iraqis have done today and have committed themselves to do in the future by voting for a free Iraq.

But more especially, Madam Speaker, I would like to call attention to the men and women in uniform from America and around the globe in the coalition forces, but especially tonight the American men and women who have made this election possible, who have spoken out, who have given, in many cases, their lives so that Iraqi men and women could vote today and determine their own future.

My most sincere thanks and the thanks of a grateful Nation is extended from every quarter today to these men and women who have performed so courageously and so remarkably and have made this day and this election possible. I do not know how we can thank them enough, but it is a privilege for me to stand before the people's House and call attention to these wonderful men and women who represent America and all we stand for: freedom, democracy, equal opportunity.

They did it today. What a tribute to them, but especially a tribute to their

families, the moms and dads, wives and husbands of those soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines whose lives have been lost in the quest for freedom for people around the world.

So as I close, Madam Speaker, thank you for allowing me to speak tonight on behalf of myself, the Eighth Congressional District of North Carolina, the home of Fort Bragg, the 18th Airborne Corps, the 82nd Airborne Division, and all the men and women in uniform. God has blessed America so richly by giving us these men and women who have stood and fought and won for democracy.

God bless them all.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFazio) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFazio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### IRAQI ELECTIONS

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, with the holidays upon us, some Members of this body have been working really hard to divert attention from much of the pressing issues that we should be working on in this Congress. They have been doing this by complaining about some kind of war on Christmas.

You can always tell when their poll numbers are down. That is when they reach into their bag of culture war tricks and gin up a divisive controversy that has nothing to do with Americans' real challenges and Americans' real aspirations. It is really interesting, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are very interested in preserving the symbols of Christmas. But the war they are supporting and the budgets they are passing, more Scrooge than Santa, demonstrate that they have forgotten the true meaning of Christmas, particularly the part about peace on Earth and goodwill towards all.

Besides, how many casualties have there been in this so-called war on Christmas? Here is a hint. Several thousand less than the war on Iraq. Today, without a doubt, we should congratulate the Iraqi people for what appears to be a successful, high turnout election. For the third time this year, courageous Iraqi citizens have enthusiastically exercised their democratic rights.

But successful elections do not, and cannot, obscure the devastating na-

tional tragedy that is the Iraq war. It does not change the fact that over 2,100 Americans have died for weapons of mass destruction that never existed. It does not change the fact that this war has turned Iraq into a hotbed of terrorist activity. It does not change the fact that our troops are sitting ducks for the insurgents who have been emboldened, not deterred, by our military presence in Iraq.

Now that the elections are over, the question is, What now? What next in terms of U.S. policy towards Iraq? Aside from trying to spin it and take credit for it, what is the President's reaction to this Iraqi election? All indications are that even with a modest reduction in troops, he will insist that we must stay the course. That means continuing with this bloody occupation that has killed or maimed thousands of our people, has cost us hundreds of billions of dollars and turned the entire world against us. Furthermore, he will not see the irony in celebrating Iraqi democracy while we use United States taxpayer money to manufacture propaganda and spread it in the Iraqi press. He will ignore the contradiction in praising Iraqi freedom while violating civil liberties at home by pushing for a more heavy-handed and invasive sequel to the PATRIOT Act.

Here is the bottom line: a successful Iraqi election should, at the very least, reinforce the imperative of bringing our troops home. If Iraq is truly able to self-govern, then we have no business occupying their country and meddling in their affairs.

I have argued all year long that it is time to restore Iraqi sovereignty and give Iraq back to the Iraqi people. If the election is a watershed moment, as the White House claims, then what is the continued justification for having our troops over there in harm's way?

Now is the time to enlist the support of the international community to establish an interim security force for Iraq. But that is just the first step. As I have written to the President in a letter signed by 61 other Members of the House, the United States must also launch a diplomatic offensive recasting our role in Iraq as a reconstruction partner, rather than a military occupier.

We must also lead the way in establishing an international peace commission to oversee the post-war reconciliation and coordinate peace talks between Iraq's various factions.

Madam Speaker, sometimes it seems like the only people who still support this war work in the big white building down Pennsylvania Avenue. There is barely any constituency left for our Iraq policy. The majority of the American people are not behind it; our global allies are not behind it. The Iraqi people are not behind it. Even Iraqi leaders, Sunnis, Shiites and Kurdish alike, who agree on practically nothing, have united around the call for the United States military to leave. With the Iraqi people having voted once